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ABSTRACT

Determining the age, grade, sex, and reason for withdrawal for each dropout in the Texas Small Schools Project during 1966-71, this study is based on a 79% questionnaire response from the project schools, the results of which are compared with results from a 1964 study. The 1964 study revealed, for example, that 10th grade was by far the dominant dropout grade for males; the 1972 study, although maintaining a high 10th-grade dropout rate, showed a more even distribution of dropouts throughout the high school years. Female dropout patterns were similar in both studies, with high dropout percentages in the 10th and 11th grades. Age 17 emerged as the dominant dropout age in the 1972 study, as compared with the previous dominant dropout age of 16 years. In the 1972 study, decreases were noted in 6th and 7th grade dropouts, in the male-to-female dropout ratio, in overall dropout percentage rates, and in students leaving school for a single reason. Marriage, low scholastic ability, and dissatisfaction with school were the predominant single reasons for dropping out. Included in the report along with findings of the study are 4 figures and appendices showing the questionnaire and the 108 member schools that participated in this study. A related document is ED 019 145. (MJB)

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DROPOUTS

in the

TEXAS SMALL SCHOOLS PROJECT

1966 - 1971

Texas Education Agency
Division of Administrative Services
Small Schools Project
April, 1972

RC006112

DROPOUTS IN THE TEXAS SMALL SCHOOLS PROJECT

1966-1971

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine the age, grade, sex, and reason for withdrawal for each dropout in the schools participating in the Texas Small Schools Project during the period 1966-71. Whenever possible, comparisons will be made with a similar study completed in 1964.

BACKGROUND

In January 1964, the staff of the Texas Small Schools Project at the Texas Education Agency undertook the task of conducting a five year dropout study of the 84 schools which were members of the Project. Such a time span would have included the two school years prior to the organization of the Project in 1960, however, sufficient information was available to cover only the latter three years of the projected period, 1960-63. Furthermore, only 58% of the Project schools (49 out of 84) provided information for that study.

At the annual Small Schools Summer Workshop in 1971, the Executive Committee of the Texas Small Schools Association requested that the Project staff conduct another dropout study to update this information.

Design of the Study

School administrators were asked to provide one or more reasons why students in their school dropped out as requested in Appendix A. Similar information was requested in the 1964 study. The coded reasons in the questionnaire used in the current study were taken from the summary data of the 1964

study; however, it is not known whether the indicated reasons were originally presented on the 1964 questionnaire or were ascertained after the data was collected.

Enrollment figures used in computing percentage of dropouts were obtained from the Division of Data Processing, Texas Education Agency. However, since several schools involved have one or more years of missing dropout records, their enrollments for those years were subtracted from the totals.

The questionnaire used to obtain information for the present study and a list of Project schools which participated are included in Appendices A and B, respectively.

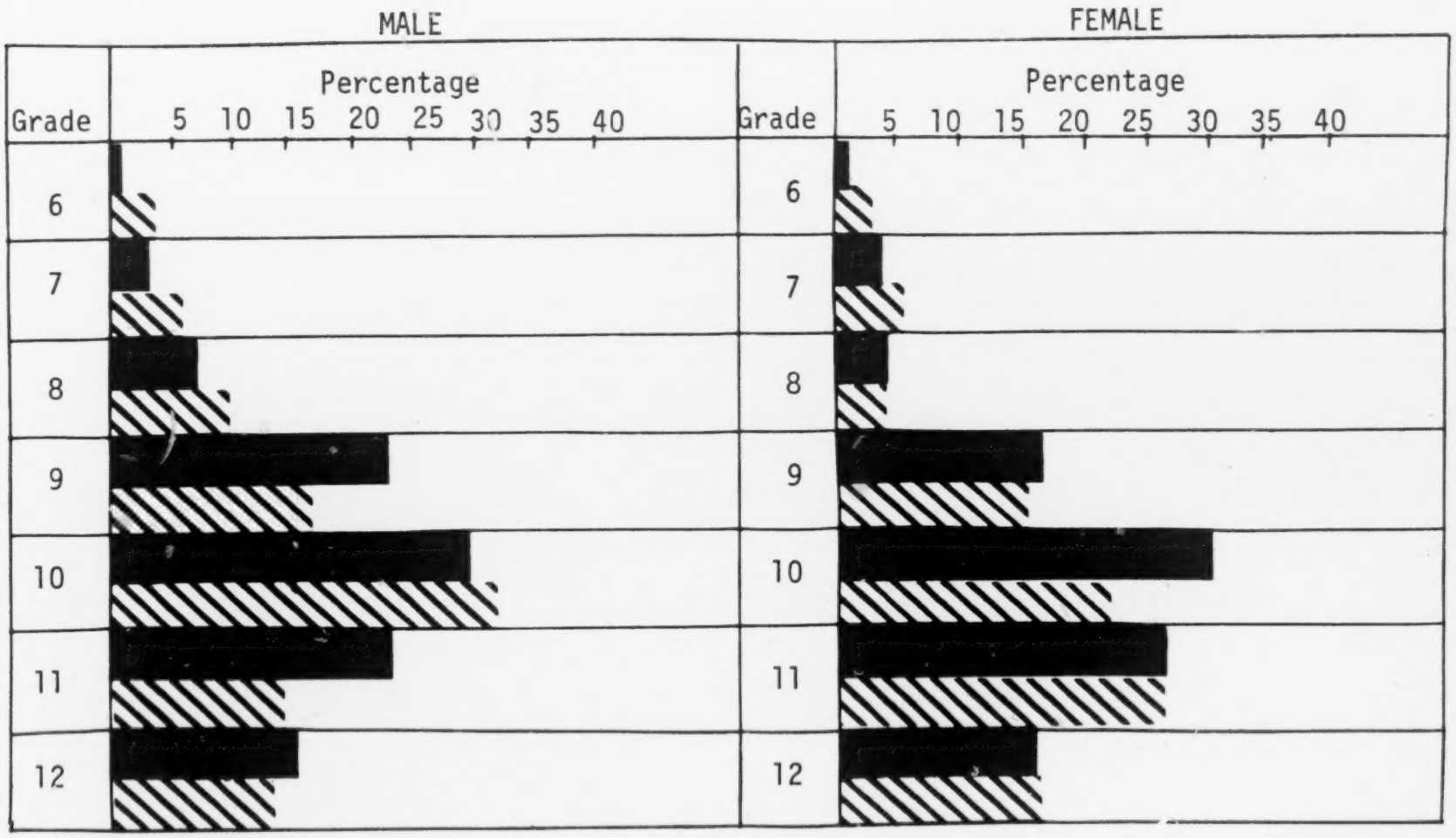
FINDINGS

In the 1972 study, 79% of the Project schools (108 out of 136) responded to the survey. Only eight of the responding schools indicated that no data was available for the first year of the study (1966-67). Of this same group of eight, four indicated the same problem for the second year (1967-68), two for the third year (1968-69), and only one for the fourth year (1969-70).

In Figures I, II, and III, comparisons of percentages are shown between the 1964 and 1972 studies. In each of these three illustrations, the percentage for each sex is computed separately instead of from the combined total of male and female dropouts.

FIGURE I

GRADE LEVELS GIVEN MOST FREQUENTLY FOR DROPOUTS



The following comparisons between the 1964 and 1972 studies are evident:

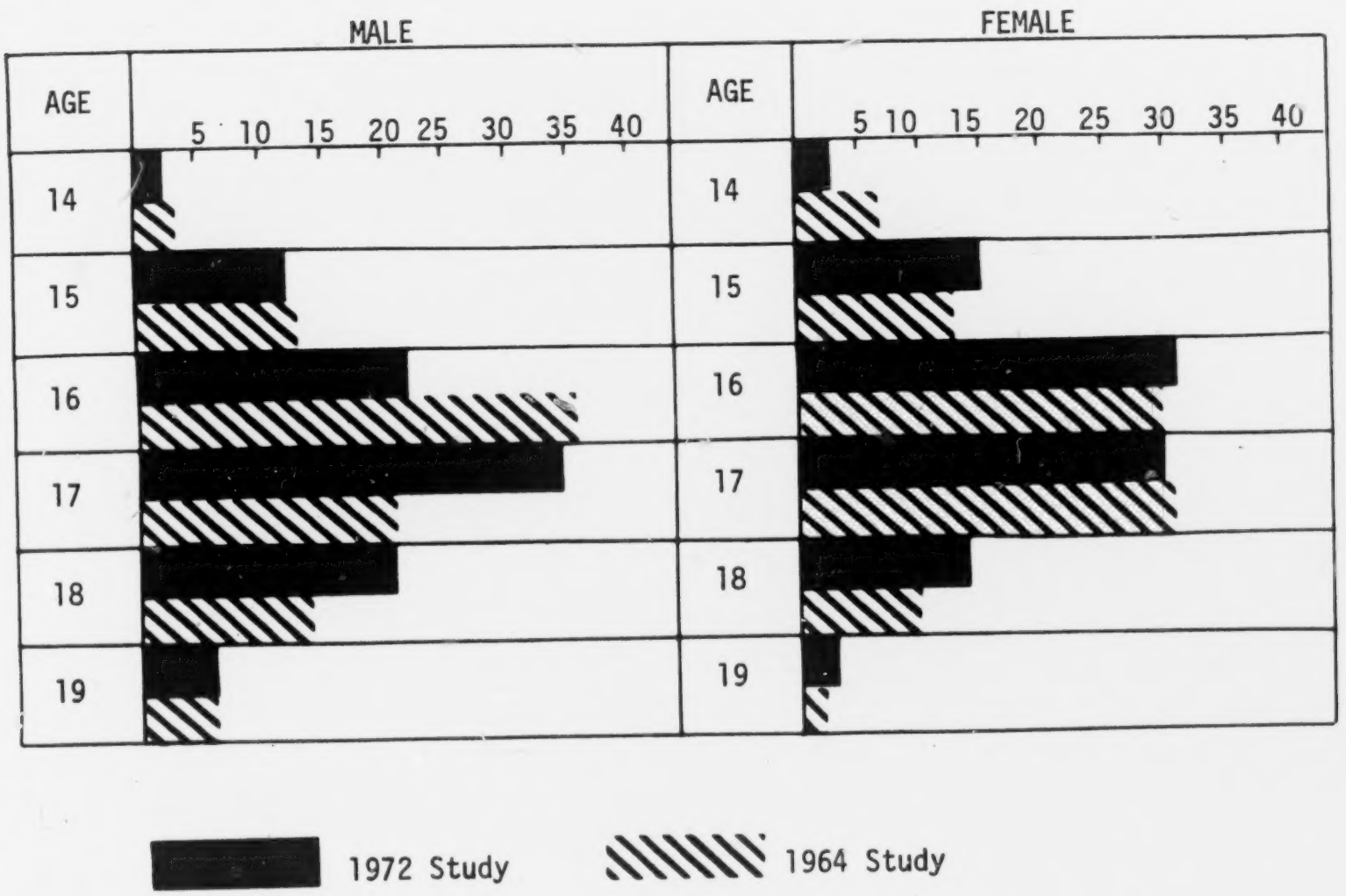
1. The percentages of dropouts in the sixth and seventh grades have decreased from a total of approximately 10% to less than 4% in both sexes.

2. The 1964 study indicates that the tenth grade was by far the dominant dropout grade for males. The 1972 study, although maintaining a high tenth grade dropout rate, pictures a more even distribution of dropouts throughout the high school years.

3. The female dropout patterns are very similar in both studies with high dropout percentages in the tenth and eleventh grades.

FIGURE II

AGES GIVEN MOST FREQUENTLY FOR DROPOUTS



The following comparisons may be made between the 1964 and 1972 studies:

1. Dropout ages for males are similar except that in the 1972 study, age 17 is clearly the dominant dropout age. In the 1964 study, age 16 showed a similar dominance.

2. Very little difference in dropout ages for females exists between the two studies.

FIGURE III

PERCENTAGES OF DROPOUTS DUE TO SINGLE REASONS

Reasons	Male		Female	
	1964 Study	1972 Study	1964 Study	1972 Study
Low scholastic ability	14	4	7	1
Mental retardation	10	1	4	1
Financial need	8	2	3	1
Dissatisfaction with school	10	3	5	3
Poor parental attitude	12	1	3	1
Marriage	7	5	61	42
Poor personal adjustment	6	1	4	< 1
Delinquency	7	1	2	< 1
Inadequate curriculum	0	0	0	0
Dislike for teachers	2	< 1	0	0
Frequent transfer from school to school	2	4	0	4
Poor health	2	< 1	2	0
Join armed forces	3	5	< 1	< 1
Disciplinary	1	2	0	< 1
Physical disability	< 1	1	< 1	1
Death in family	1	< 1	0	0
Mental illness	< 1	< 1	< 1	< 1
Other	0	1	3	6
TOTAL	86%	31%	94%	60%

The following comparisons between the 1964 and 1972 studies are noted:

1. No one reason stands out clearly as a contributing factor for male dropouts in either study.

2. Marriage appears to be the only predominant reason for female dropouts although the percentage has decreased considerably between the two studies.

3. A marked decrease in percentages has occurred in the 1972 sample in all but a few cases where percentages were already extremely low.

4. The percentage totals have decreased greatly between the two studies, particularly in the male dropout columns.

FIGURE IV

REASONS GIVEN MOST FREQUENTLY BY ADMINISTRATORS FOR DROPOUTS

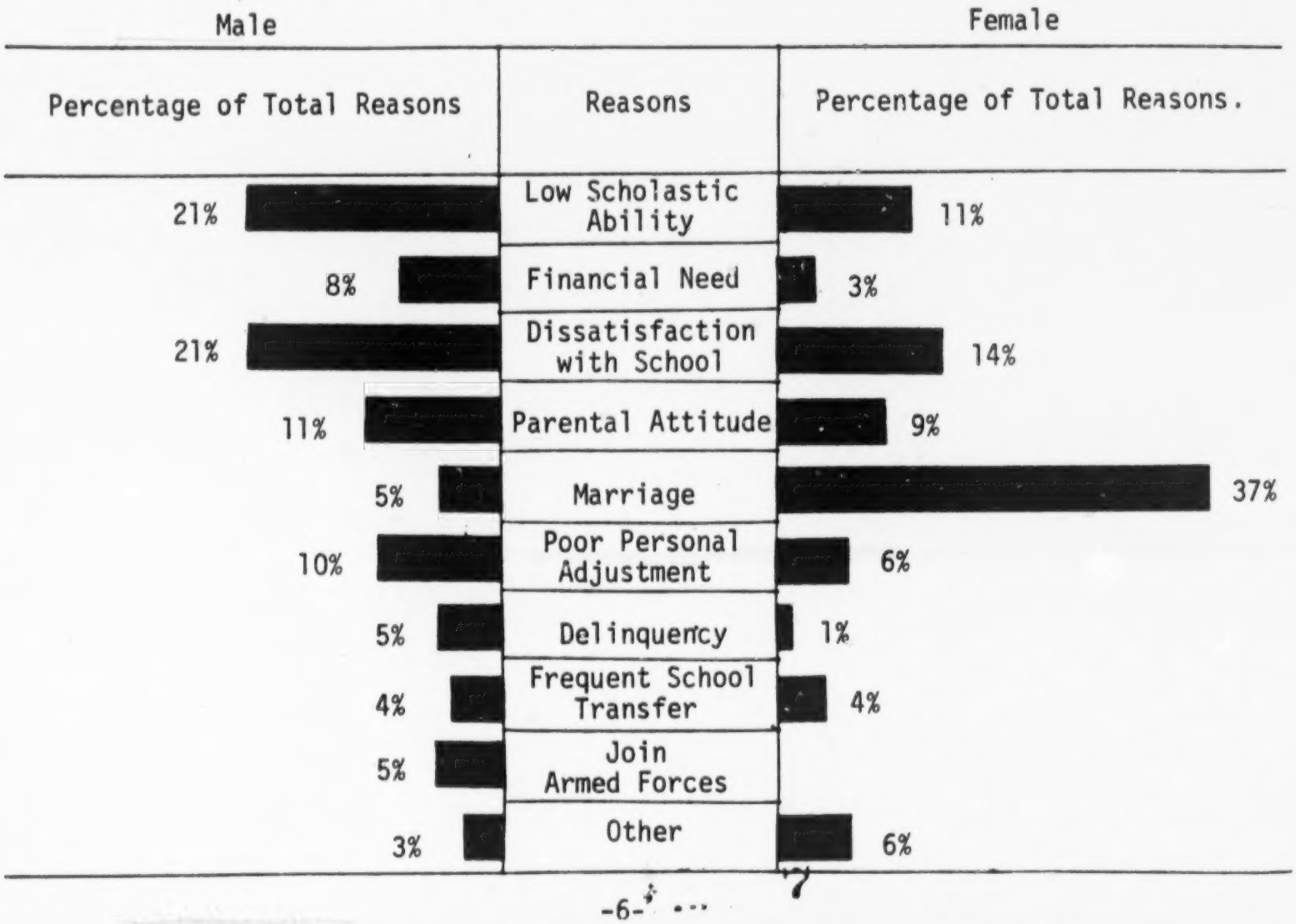


Figure IV differs from the preceding figure illustrations in that no comparison is made with the 1964 study since that study lacked the necessary data. In this illustration the reasons were counted whether given singly or in combination.

Figure IV reveals the following information:

1. Low Scholastic Ability, Dissatisfaction with School, and Marriage appear most frequently in a list of total reasons for dropouts.

2. Except for Marriage, most reasons given for dropouts show somewhat similar percentages for both sexes.

FIGURE V

DROPOUT PERCENTAGE RATES - 1964 STUDY

Year	Dropouts			Total Enrollment	Dropout Percentage Rate
	Male	Female	Total		
1960-61	101 (59.1%)	70 (40.9%)	171	10,201	1.68%
1961-62	97 (59.5%)	66 (40.5%)	163	10,313	1.58%
1962-63	71 (56.8%)	54 (43.2%)	125	10,467	1.19%
	269 (58.6%)	190 (41.4%)	459	30,981	1.48% (Overall)

FIGURE VI

DROPOUT PERCENTAGE RATES - 1972 STUDY

Year	Dropouts			Total Enrollment	Dropout Percentage Rate
	Male	Female	Total		
1966-67	114 (50.4%)	112 (49.6%)	226	23,214	0.97%
1967-68	121 (50.0%)	121 (50.0%)	242	24,034	1.01%
1968-69	144 (48.5%)	153 (51.5%)	297	24,562	1.21%
1969-70	169 (52.5%)	153 (47.5%)	322	24,928	1.29%
1970-71	170 (52.3%)	155 (47.7%)	325	26,128	1.24%
	718 (50.8%)	694 (49.2%)	1,412	122,866	1.15% (Overall)

The following comparisons of dropout percentage information may be made between Figures V and VI:

1. A definite overall decrease in the male to female dropout ratio is observed. Male dropouts actually are less than females at one point.

2. The overall dropout percentage rate, obtained by dividing total dropouts by total enrollment, has decreased slightly between the two studies.

CONCLUSIONS

The fact that a greater percentage of Project schools responded to the 1972 questionnaire and were able to provide more complete information for a longer time span suggests that small schools are keeping better dropout records and are perhaps more concerned with the problem than in the past.

The raising of the minimum age for compulsory school attendance to seventeen between the time of the two studies has apparently had a questionable effect on small school dropouts. Figure II clearly shows a major shift in the predominant dropout age of males from sixteen to seventeen, however, little change occurs in the female category. In fact, 36% of all male and 49% of all female dropouts in the 1972 study could be classified as illegal. Apparently schools are still not forcing the issue very strongly.

A comparison of the overall dropout percentage rates shows a definite decrease between the 1964 and 1972 studies. However, an examination of the year to year rates in Figures V and VI reveals what appears to be a pattern almost cyclical in nature. A rather marked decrease in the 1964 study is followed by a gradual increase throughout the 1972 study except for a sudden decrease in the last year of the study. Since no data was collected for the three intervening school years, 1963-64 through 1965-66, it is not known what or where the lowest point is within this cycle.

A marked decrease in the male to female dropout ratio between the two studies is apparent. From a high point of almost 60%, the male dropouts have decreased at one point to less than 50%. No plausible explanation from the data seems to account for this phenomenon.

One unknown factor possibly affecting the dropout rate is the ethnic or racial composition of these schools during the past decade. Schools in the Project range from a completely white Anglo composition to as high as 90% black and/or Mexican-American enrollment. The problem is further complicated by the fact that several schools operated dual campus systems during the years of the 1964 study and began abandoning this arrangement in the latter part of the decade. It is not known whether or not all minority student dropouts were included in the 1964 study. In any event no attempt has been made in either study to identify dropouts by racial or ethnic origin.

The variation in individual school dropout rates is a puzzling phenomenon. The dropout rate over the five year period in the 1972 study ranged from zero in seven schools to almost 5% in one school. Many unexplored factors possibly contribute to these variations such as the aforementioned minority student enrollment, adequacy of the secondary curriculum, location of the school with respect to larger towns and cities, available unskilled job opportunities, attitudes of administrators and faculty toward potential dropouts, parental attitudes, and school policies concerning student marriage.

A word of caution is recommended before any attempt is made to compare dropout rates with larger school districts. First, the dropout rates for these studies were computed by using total school enrollment (original entry) figures. This was done in the 1972 study because of the availability of the data and also in order to provide comparisons with the 1964 study. Such computations obviously produce very small percentage rates since dropouts at the elementary level are almost negligible in any school system.

Second, the means of computation for other dropout studies, such as the one in the report of the Governor's Committee on Public School Education, are not available. Third, the Division of Research at the Texas Education Agency has made no attempt to collect statewide dropout information.

Administrators apparently are beginning to recognize that dropouts often occur due to multiple reasons. Figure III indicates that 86% of all male dropouts in the 1964 study were attributed to single reasons while the same was true only for 31% of males in the 1972 study. Likewise, this percentage decreased among females from 94% to 60%. In the latter case, 42% of the 60% were attributed to Marriage alone. Perhaps these changes suggest that administrators are taking a more serious look at the reasons why students drop out.

An analysis of Figure IV, which deals with the total number of times any particular reason was given for dropping out, might raise some question about the factors of Low Scholastic Ability and Dissatisfaction with School. In the former case, a small school environment with a chance for more personal attention and contact with teachers should tend to negate this factor. In the latter case, this reason is probably interrelated with a number of other reasons on the list. One might also ask the question as to what extent Inadequate Curriculum, a reason rarely mentioned in either study, is associated with the reason of Dissatisfaction with School.

In any study of this kind, many questions are left to be answered. Perhaps more information should be sought concerning what small schools are doing to meet the needs of the potential dropout, what procedures administrators

employ in dealing with the student once he makes his intentions known, and to what extent the services of county cooperative counselors are utilized in dropout prevention. Hopefully, this report may stimulate small schools to take more positive action in alleviating this nagging problem.

Appendix A

(Spacing Modified)

School _____

Instructions: The sample entry indicates that an 18 year old eleventh grade boy dropped out of school during the 1970-71 school year for reasons number four and thirteen listed below. Please enter all other drop-outs in like manner for the years indicated. There should be One OR More reasons for dropping out for each entry.

School Year	Grade	Sex	Age	Reason(s) for Dropping Out
1970-71	11	M	18	4, 13
1969-70				
1968-69				
1967-68				
1966-67				

Reasons For Dropping Out

1. Low scholastic ability
2. Mental retardation
3. Financial need
4. Dissatisfaction with school
5. Poor parental attitude
6. Marriage
7. Poor personal adjustment
8. Delinquency
9. Inadequate curriculum
10. Dislike for teachers
11. Frequent transfer from school to school
12. Poor health
13. Join Armed Forces
14. Disciplinary
15. Physical disability
16. Death in the family
17. Mental Illness
18. Other

APPENDIX B

The following 108 member schools of the Texas Small Schools Project provided the data included for this dropout study.

Alba-Golden
Allison
Antelope
Austwell-Tivoli
Avalon
Avery
Balmorhea
Batesville
Benjamin
Big Sandy
Bledsoe
Blue Ridge
Borden County
Bronte
Brookeland
Bullard
Burton
Carney
Cayuga
Center Point
Chester
Colmesneil
Cranfills Gap
Cumby
Darrouzett
Detroit
Dime Box
Divide
Eola
Eustace
Evant
Fayetteville
Fluvanna
Follett
Frankston
Goldburg
Gorman
Goree
Harper
Hedley
Hobbs
Ira
Iredell
Kemp
Klondike
Knippa
Kopperl
Krum
La Poynor
La Pryor
Latexo
Leon
Lingleville
Lone Oak
Lovelady
Mabank
McAdoo
Medina
Meridian
Moran
Morgan
Mozelle
Mullin
Neches
Newcastle
New Diana
New Summerfield
New Waverly
Nordheim
North Zulch
Novice
Nueces Canyon
Old Glory
Paint Rock
Palmer
Pep
Ponder
Priddy
Putnam
Quail
Richards
Rio Vista
Robert Lee
Rochelle
Roscoe
Round Top-Carmine
Rule
Samnorwood
Santa Anna
Scurry-Rosser
Shepherd
Spurger
Talpa Centennial
Tolar
Trinidad
Union
Utopia
Valentine
Valley View
Walnut Springs
Weinert
Wellman
Westbrook
Wheeler
Whiteface
Whitharral
Woodson
Zephyr